



It was Sunday breakfast with a side order of debate for the members of the Temple Beth Israel

Beginning what is hoped will become a monthly tradition, members of the local Jewish community gathered for breakfast at the Villa Germania in the Seaport Marketplace to enjoy orange juice, omelets and opinions. The topic of debate led by Rabbi Marcelo Bater this past Sunday was the Disengagement of the Gaza, a topic that is of particular interest to a number of the members that just returned from a trip to Israel at the end of the July. Aty van de Horst, when of the travelers, expressed her heartbreak at having to actually witness some of the people being taken by from their lovely settlements, and being relocated to areas that she could only describe as “ghettos.”

Here is a brief history of the Gaza strip:

1948-49

British troops leave Mandatory Palestine. The State of Israel is declared.

In the Israeli war of Independence, thousands of Palestinians, fleeing other cities like Jaffa and Beersheba, settle in the Gaza Strip, mostly in refugee camps. Gaza Strip's population triples.

Following the signing of the armistice, the Gaza Strip comes under Egyptian military rule. Egypt does not give Egyptian citizenship to the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip.

1967

Israel captures the Gaza Strip during the Six Day War. The United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 242, calling for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the war in exchange for an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

1970-72

In 1970, Kfar Darom - a Jewish community in the Strip evacuated in 1948 - is re-established as a para-military Nahal outpost. In 1972, Netzer Hazani, the first civilian Jewish community in the Gaza Strip, is founded. And Netzarim and Morag are founded as para-military Nahal outposts.

1978

Israel and Egypt sign the Camp David Accords, in which they pledge to try to reach an agreement on Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. In response, Jewish settlement groups start to establish more settlements to ensure Jewish presence in the Gaza Strip. Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip grows in the 1980s.

1994

The Gaza-Jericho Agreement is signed; IDF forces leave most of the Strip's Palestinian inhabited areas, but maintain control of the Jewish settlements, borders and certain strategic points.

1995

Hamas and Islamic Jihad carry out suicide bombings against Israelis. Israel surrounds the Strip with a security fence. Israel and the Palestinian Authority sign the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

2000-01

Camp David Summit fails. The Second Intifada begins. Jewish settlements in Gaza suffer constant attacks. Palestinians in Gaza fire missiles at Israeli communities in the Negev. Israeli helicopters attack targets in Palestinian areas, and IDF tanks enter refugee camps. Curfews placed on Palestinians, security at checkpoints increased.

2003-04

In response to Palestinian attacks, the IDF recaptures parts of the Gaza Strip. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon presents a Disengagement Plan from Gaza and the northern West Bank.

2005

Knesset ratifies Sharon's Disengagement Plan. Government announces August 15 as the day disengagement is set to begin. Passionate, nationwide anti-disengagement protests begin. 80% of the population evacuate peacefully, the rest have to be forcibly removed.

There is a saying that if you put ten Jews in a room to discuss an issue, you will have ten different opinions, but most were in accord with the issues raised by the Disengagement and what purpose it will actually serve. Giving back the Gaza may appease some in the Palestinian Authority for the moment, but all generally agreed that it would not stop terrorism. The shared opinion was that even if Israel gave back Jerusalem, which most likely will never happen, no peace accords that could be signed would control terrorism, unless the Palestinians take an active part in policing these extreme factions. The fact is that Israel has been giving back lands won in the Six Day war for the past twenty years, and terrorism has only escalated, so in the end, what is the answer? Can there ever be an answer?

Though the group did not manage to solve Israel's problems over breakfast, they did agree that it was an enjoyable, enlightening morning, and decided to continue this new activity next month. There are many questions that trouble Jews in a modern and changing world, a world that strains one's faith and traditions, and they plan to continue examining these issues in depth on a monthly basis, in a convivial atmosphere.

